

January 13, 2012

Office of the Secretary
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268

To whom it may concern:

Attached you will find a Form 61 to be considered by the Postal Regulatory Commission in regards to the proposed closing of the Ashton, Iowa Post Office, Docket #A2012-97.

I am submitting this Form 61 on an unsolicited basis. I spoke with both our local librarian, Alfreda Ver Doorn and our City Clerk, Nancy Marnach, which had both received a letter and Form 61 from your office. I'm sure it was an oversight to not send one to me as I also filed an appeal to the decision to close the Ashton, Iowa Post Office. This morning I spoke with both Annie Kennedy and Rand Costich of your office today and they suggested that I file a Form 61 as well. I have copied the form from the letter sent to the City of Ashton and completed on my behalf.

As I have stated in my original appeal, I look forward to any and all responses concerning our appeals. If there are any questions concerning the information provided or would like additional information pertaining to the items enumerated or other issues, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

BDM/bdm
Attachment

BEFORE THE
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20268

In the Matter of:

Ashton, Iowa 51232
Post Office State ZIP Code

Docket No: A2012-97

Brian D. Mino, President
Ashton State Bank, Petitioner(s)

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

1. Petitioner(s) are appealing the Postal Service's Final Determination concerning the Ashton, IA post office. The Final Determination was posted 11/7/2011.
(date)

2. In accordance with applicable law, 39 U.S.C. § 404(d)(5), the Petitioner(s) request the Postal Regulatory Commission to review the Postal Service's determination on the basis of the record before the Postal Service in the making of the determination.

3. Petitioners: Please set out below the reasons why you believe the Postal Service's Final Determination should be reversed and returned to the Postal Service for further consideration. (See pages of the Instructions for an outline of the kinds of reasons the law requires us to consider.) Please be as specific as possible. Please continue on additional paper if you need more space and attach the additional page(s) to this form.

1. The postal service failed to fully address the effects on the
local community. Brian Mino brought it to the attention of
Post Office Operations Manager Kent Gochenour that the Ashton
State Bank has time sensitive mail that needs to go out at the
end of the day and the Bank would be forced to drive to Sibley,
Iowa to deliver this time sensitive mail at a cost of at least
\$75.00 per week or nearly \$4,000 annually. This estimate is
conservative and has not been addressed by Mr. Gochenour or

anyone within the postal service including Gail Duba, then head of the Hawkeye District or Joni Martin, then Consumer Affairs Manager. Mr. Gochenour sent responses stating that my correspondence related to the postmaster position not being filled, what purpose an OIC serves and a third singing the woes of the postal service losing money and not addressing my concerns. Both Ms. Duba and Ms. Martin sent form letters telling me a community meeting was held in my community on May 2, 2011.

When someone sends correspondence that shows what they presented at the meeting and then is informed by the respondent that a meeting was held, makes it quite apparent that they failed to even read the correspondence. If the correspondence is not read, how could an informed decision have been made by Mr. Gochenour or Ms. Duba?

2. The postal service has shown they believe Ashton, Iowa merits a post office. In 2005, the Ashton, Iowa post office was emergency suspended for a mold infestation. The local office was physically relocated to Sheldon, Iowa for a period of time before a different temporary location was reestablished in the City of Ashton. Beginning in 2005, I served as the head of a City of Ashton committee to deal with the post office closing and the pursuit of a permanent facility. Since that time,

I have dealt with Doug Morrow (retired head of the Hawkeye District) and Mike Ward (retired facilities person from the Western Area in Denver). Discussions were held concerning construction of a new facility as well as improvements to the temporary facility. On April 15, 2010, Garry Mattox of the Western Area made a trip to Iowa specifically to hold community meetings in both Ashton and Alton, Iowa. His comments at the meeting held in Ashton included statements that said there were big changes coming in the postal service and we don't want Ashton to be part of them and we want to have a new 5 year lease in place to avoid any problems. This lease has since been finalized and is currently in place. Based upon the actions and commitments of the previously mentioned people, it is apparent that the postal service considered Ashton a viable location for a post office. Furthermore, Ms. Duba, who served as head of the Hawkeye District for a relatively short period, made a hasty uninformed decision to include Ashton on a lengthy list of probable closures in Iowa.

3. The postal service failed to exhaust all possible alternatives to save money before making the decision to shutter the Ashton, Iowa Post Office. The City of Ashton as well as the committee that I am the head of, has shown a willingness to work on a

cooperative basis with the Postal Service. The citizens of Ashton have adapted to a post office that has window hours of just 8:00 to 11:45 a.m. on Monday through Friday and a further reduced schedule on Saturday. We have made proposals to share a Postmaster with another nearby community to further enhance savings by the Postal Service as well as other options. All of which have gone unacknowledged by the Postal Service. It is truly impossible to accomplish anything in a one-sided conversation with an organization like the Postal Service that chooses to issue decisions without exploring other possibilities.

I am attaching a copy of my original appeal to further reiterate the points made as well as a source of supporting documentation for the points I made in this document. The original appeal contains the letters submitted to Mr. Gochenour, Ms. Duba and Ms. Martin.

December 1, 2011

Ruth Y. Goldway, Chairman
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268-0001

Re: Ashton, IA 51232, Post Office Final Determination, Docket Number 1353512-51232

Dear Ms. Goldway and other Board Members:

I am appealing the decision of the United State Postal Service to close the Ashton, Iowa, 51232, Post Office. I feel that the postal service has not adequately evaluated the needs of the community and has ignored pertinent information presented to make their case for closure.

I will start with a brief introduction of myself, so you will see I am not an uninformed person that just thinks Ashton should have a post office because we always have. I am Brian Mino, President of the Ashton State Bank. I moved to Ashton in 1993 as a Vice President of the bank and have been President since 2001. In addition to this title, I am actively involved in Osceola County economic development and other civic boards. When the post office in Ashton was emergency suspended for a mold infestation in 2005, I headed a committee to work with postal officials to have the post office reopened locally and am still acting in that capacity. The post office is currently considered "Temporary" and has only 3.5 window hours daily.

My first objection to closure is from a business standpoint. The Ashton State Bank is a \$38 Million, community bank domiciled in Ashton. We have one location and that is in downtown Ashton. We are not a branch of another institution in a larger town or city. The postal service proposes to replace our post office with rural delivery service, with the rural carrier placing CBU's in our community. The rural carrier would deliver the mail and pick up the mail at the same time. This scenario will not work with the Ashton State Bank. If the rural carrier delivers the mail at 11:00 a.m., we certainly can post the transactions received by mail that day as the cutoff of our business day is at 3:00 p.m.. After 3:00 each day, we finish our daily activities and print overdraft / non-sufficient funds notices and other pertinent correspondence that needs to go out yet that day. If you were a customer of mine and your account was overdrawn and the notice was not mailed until tomorrow, versus today, and you incurred additional charges as a result of the mail delay, would you be happy. We don't like our customers incurring unnecessary charges any more than we like charging them. Customer service has always been our strength and delivery of time sensitive material is imperative. For this reason, we would be forced to drive to our new retail location in Sibley, Iowa to post this time sensitive mail. The trip to Sibley is approximately 15 miles round trip and would require at least 30 minutes of an employees time on a daily basis. The direct cost to the Ashton State Bank for this would be approximately \$75 per week or just short of \$4,000.00 per year.

Secondly, I am objecting based upon the postal service making an uninformed decision and furthermore ignoring pertinent information and correspondence. A public meeting was held in Ashton on May 2, 2011 to inform the community that the Ashton post office was being studied for closure. The meeting was led by Sara Lindauer and Kent Gochenour, Post Office Operations Manager for this area of Iowa. They discussed what this meant and then asked for public comment. I let the people of the community speak and then I gave a presentation which included Ashton's fight from 2005 to present to keep a post office and then told them some reasons why this wasn't right for Ashton. Mr. Gochenour said that the service would remain the same and I pointed out that it wouldn't because I have time sensitive mail and the Bank can not send and receive mail at the same time.

Following the meeting, I completed a survey that was provided to offer public comment. On May 24, 2011, I mailed a cover letter to Sara Lindauer along with the survey and a copy of my outline from the public meeting. I also sent cover letters and copies of this correspondence (which included my survey and outline) to Kent Gochenour, Post Office Operations Manager; Gail Duba, Hawkeye District Manager (the Hawkeye District contains Ashton); and Joni Martin, Consumer Affairs Manager for the Hawkeye District. Following this correspondence are their responses to me. As you can see, when they tell me "A community meeting was held on May 2, 2011" and I have provided an outline of my comments from this meeting, it appears they failed to read the correspondence and provided boilerplate feedback to me and ignored all of the information provided. If I had an employee respond in this manner, they would be severely reprimanded, if not worse. I find it particularly inconsiderate that the so-called Consumer Affairs Manager would do this. Maybe that is why neither of them are in those positions any longer.

I am also providing a copy of my last attempt at telling Post Office Operations Manager Kent Gochenour that I have time sensitive mail and that I will be forced to drive the mail to another location at the expense of the Ashton State Bank. Once again, Mr. Gochenour responds by singing the financial blues of the postal service and fails to address my concern at all.

Lastly, I am providing a copy of the final determination. No where in this document does it state that someone brought to their attention that time sensitive mail is an issue.

In closing, I realize that the postal service is experiencing huge financial losses and further acknowledge that they have to make changes to survive, however I disagree that closing every post office in small communities is the answer. As a banker, I realize that overhead is an enormous expense, but reducing overhead does not necessarily solve every problem. Furthermore, centralization may save some funds, but centralization is also nothing more than an immediate tax on those affected by the office closings. I believe I have shown that information has been presented for review in the decision making process and it has been ignored. I have also offered to try and reach a compromise such as sharing a Postmaster with a nearby community to cut costs. In return for my efforts, I have received form letters showing the Postal Service wants to be an island and do whatever they want without truly acknowledging the public's input. They have not even opened a dialogue to discuss anything in the correspondence. Ashton has tried to help the post office by living with a "temporary" office since the emergency suspension which certainly reduced their overhead, but all for not as the almighty United States Postal Service is intent on shuttering this office!

I welcome any and all comments. I can be reached by mail at: Brian D. Mino, President, Ashton State Bank, PO Box 278, Ashton, IA 51232-0278. I may also be reached by phone at: (712) 724-6326, (712) 724-6335 or (712) 461-0349 or via e-mail @ bmino@ashtonstatebank.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian D. Mino".

Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

BDM/bdm
Attachments

Cc: U.S. Senator Charles Grassley
U.S. Senator Thomas Harkin
U.S. Congressman Steve King
Iowa State Senator David Johnson
Iowa State Representative Royd Chambers
T.J. Sexton
Mark J. Sexton

May 24, 2011

Sara Lindauer
Post Office Review Investigator
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401-9998

COPY

Ms. Lindauer:

Enclosed is the survey that was provided before the meeting on May 2, 2011. I have waited to write this letter to see what, if anything had changed. It appears that nothing has changed since I gave my presentation on May 2nd (copy of notes enclosed) and I wish to reiterate a few items.

First, I feel that Ashton is different than many of the other communities on the list. Ashton was emergency suspended in 2006 and we have never been provided a full-time post office or postmaster since that time. We have been saving the postal service money with our part-time help and limited rent since that point in time.

Secondly, Ashton's population is about 540 people. It appears that most, if not all, of the other communities had populations less than 400 people. This means that closure of our postal facility would directly affect quite a number more patrons than those other communities.

Lastly, the Ashton community has more businesses than many of the other communities. More specifically is the Ashton State Bank. The Ashton State Bank was founded in 1884, 2 years after the City of Ashton. We were, and continue to be a privately owned bank that has only one location, in Ashton. In the event the post office in Ashton were closed, it would result in an immediate increase in costs to the Ashton State Bank. I will now elaborate on this.

As I stated the evening of May 2nd, the Ashton State Bank spends around \$7,000 annually with the postal service. All of our statements and other mail is produced locally. We don't have another office or data center in a larger community, all is printed and mailed from Ashton. In the event the post office were closed, our time sensitive, evening mail would have to be transported to Sibley or Sheldon. This is at a minimum, a round trip of 15 miles and ½ hour of employee time. I estimate this cost to be at least \$75.00 per week or nearly \$4,000 per year in increased costs directly to the Ashton State Bank. We can not afford to have mail delivered and picked up once per day as you are proposing as we need to receive and process our customer transactions and then notify our customers of any overdrafts, non-sufficient funds checks and other pertinent business that occurred that day after our daily cutoff of 3:00 p.m.. I believe this situation makes Ashton very much different than most, if not all, of the other communities being considered for discontinuance.

We don't use Fed Ex or UPS as Priority Mail is more affordable and provides the same, if not quicker, delivery to most locations. We have not promoted the use of e-mail statements and continue to provide delivery by USPS as our only means of delivery of our statements and other daily mail. The Ashton State Bank has been actively involved in maintaining the post office since Tom Allen came and closed it on that Saturday morning in 2006 and we first battled to have our temporary service restored. We have always maintained that Ashton wants to work cooperatively with the postal service for both of our successes, and not be a source of loss for the postal service. We hope that you too will view this fact and realize that Ashton continues to be a post office location worth maintaining.

I will be forwarding a copy of this letter to my Representative Steve King, Senators Grassley and Harkin and also sending to Joni Mitchell and Gail Duba in Des Moines. I look forward to hearing from any and all of you listed on this list.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

COPY

BDM/bdm
enc.

**Postal Service Customer Questionnaire**

1. Please check the appropriate box to indicate whether you use the ASHTON Post Office for each of the following:

Postal Services

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
a. Buying Stamps	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Mailing Letters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Mailing Parcels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Pick up Post Office box mail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Pick up general delivery mail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Buying money orders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g. Obtaining special services, including Certified Mail, Registered Mail, Insured Mail, Delivery Confirmation, or Signature Confirmation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Sending Express Mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Buying stamp-collecting material	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Other Postal Services

- a. Entering permit mailings ☐ YES ☒ NO
- b. Resetting/using postage meter ☐ YES ☒ NO

Nonpostal Services

- a. Picking up government forms (such as tax forms) ☐ YES ☒ NO
- b. Using for school bus stop ☐ YES ☒ NO
- c. Assisting senior citizens, persons with disabilities, etc. ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, please explain:

- d. Using public bulletin board ☐ YES ☒ NO

- e. Other ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, please explain:

2. Do you pass another Post Office during business hours while traveling to or from work, or shopping, or for personal needs?

☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, please explain:

- If you previously/currently received carrier delivery, there will be no change to your delivery service — proceed to question 4.
3. If you previously/currently received Post Office box service or general delivery service, complete this section. How do you think carrier route delivery or PO Box service will compare to your previous service?

☐ Better ☐ Just as Good ☐ No Opinion ☒ Worse

If yes, please explain: BANK MAIL WILL BE DELAYED A FULL DAY DUE TO 1X / DAY SERVICE.

4. For which of the following do you leave your community? (Check all that apply.) Where do you go to obtain these services?

☒ Shopping SIBLEY OR SHELDON
☒ Personal needs SIBLEY OR SHELDON
☐ Banking COPY
☐ Employment COPY
☐ Social needs COPY

5. Do you currently use local businesses in the community?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, would you continue to use them if the Post Office is discontinued?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Name: BRIAN MIXO, PRESIDENT, ASHTON STATE BANK
Address: 317 3RD ST, P.O. BOX 278, ASHTON, IA 51232
Telephone: (712) 724-6326
Date: 4-20-11

Please add any additional comments on a separate piece of paper and attach it to this form. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Introduction

- Brian Mino, President of the Ashton State Bank
- member of post office suspension committee in 1995

Important to discuss a little history concerning the Ashton post office

- March 4, 2005 - post office was closed due to mold infestation with all postal operations relocated to Sheldon, IA
- Several community meetings were held which resulted in the current location being opened on a half-time basis and the rural route being transferred to Sibley and having our rural carrier pick up a little of another Sibley route as well. Current location opened late in 2005.
- In late 2006 and early 2007, construction of a new facility in Ashton was discussed. A meeting was held on January 23, 2007 at the Sioux City sorting facility. Present were Doug Morrow (Hawkeye District Manager), Mike Ward from Western Area facilities management, Lori Slater-Trautwein (POOM at that time) and Sandy Bolin-Townes all from the postal service. Present from Ashton were myself, Mayor Mel Tiedemann and Council Person Dee Redinius. Also present was William Anderson of Senator Grassley's office. At this meeting a verbal agreement to erect a new facility on main street was reached with a 2 year initial lease and 3-1 year renewals as there was a moratorium on permanent, long-term leases at that time.
- Sometime between 2007 and 2008, the moratorium was lifted and the looked at remodeling the existing facility and then Mike Ward of Western Area contacted us and said they wanted to put a new facility out for bids. After receiving all of the bids, the postal service selected a location in the city park and locals decided that was not the appropriate place for the post office.

-On April 15, 2010, a meeting was held with Garry Mattox of Western area to discuss extension of lease to 5 years to shelter Ashton in the event that post offices are closed.

-Presently, we are back to where we started in March of 2005.

Why should the current post office location be maintained?

-Ashton has been proactive in limiting the expense exposure for the postal service allowing for the post office to operate profitably on a local basis

COPY

-There are several businesses in Ashton that utilize the post office quite heavily. The local bank spent over \$8,000 in 2008 and over \$7,000 in both 2009 and 2010 in postage. In addition to this, the bank has time sensitive mail that needs to go out at the end of each day. One-time delivery and pickup do not meet these needs, so a special trip to Sibley would have to be made which would result in increased mileage and personnel expense for their business.

-Overhead is limited as the current facility has been operated on a half-day basis since 2005. The rent is affordable and the utilization of temporary staffing has further driven down costs resulting in low operating costs.

-As recently as 2010, postal officials felt the Ashton location merited continuance by their insistence on extending the lease.

Few questions:

-What has been Ashton revenue for last 3 years?

<u>Year</u>	<u>Harris</u>	<u>Ashton</u>
2008	\$24,???	
2009	\$25,831	
2010	\$21,516	

-How many post office boxes are there and how many are rented?

-In Harris, it was stated there were 85 PO Boxes. Is that total or leased?

COPY

Based upon the above facts as well as the answers provided, it may make sense to leave the Ashton location unchanged. You say you are the messengers, but you review the information gathered at the meeting tonight and then submit to Washington. A favorable recommendation on a local level would certainly help when the information gets to Washington.

Thank you for your time this evening and for considering Ashton to be a viable post office location and justifying continuance. We would certainly like to think that Ashton has been, and will continue to be, part of the solution for the postal service and not part of the problem.

May 24, 2011

Kent Gochenour
Post Office Operations Manager
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-9998

Kent:

It was nice meeting you at the meeting in Ashton on May 2nd. I think that you and Sara probably learned a little about Ashton. We have been on this roller coaster for a number of years now and felt after Gary Mattux was here last summer, maybe we had a little immunity working for us. Guess we were wrong, but that doesn't mean I'll give up yet.

Enclosed is the survey that I sent back to Sara as well as a cover letter to her and also letters to Joni Martin and Gail Duba. Didn't know exactly what Gail's address was, so sent it to the same PO box that Doug Morrow used to accept mail at - hopefully it gets there. I know that the role you play in this whole thing can't be overly comfortable for you either. Having to go out and tell people in communities that they probably aren't going to have a post office in the near future has to be tough as well as realizing that with this, the number of offices you oversee declines at the same time. It is for this reason, that I appeal to you.

If there is some way that we can remedy this situation without closing the physical plant here, I feel it is advantageous to both of us. As I stated, it will cost me \$3,500 to \$4,000 in additional travel and personnel costs if the post office is closed. If the post office closes, that is one less for you to oversee. Can we not explore something like sharing Melvin's postmaster? It is my understanding that Melvin has a young postmaster and she lives straight east of Ashton. It appears that management of the postal service is currently not wanting to take on the postal union at this point. If we shared Melvin's postmaster, the savings would be even greater than allocating \$20,000.00 to additional expense for the rural carrier to service Ashton. You save at Melvin and basically have unchanged expense in Ashton and you haven't had to address the union. This is one idea I have, maybe there are more that allow us to mutually solve the problem.

Kent, I look forward to any comments or questions you may have and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

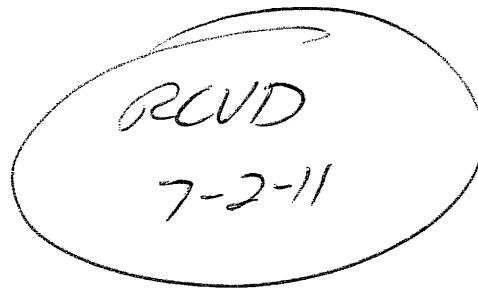


Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

BDM/bdm
enc.



06/30/2011



BRIAN MINO

PO BOX 278
ASHTON, IA 51232

Dear Postal Service Customer:

Thank you for returning your questionnaire concerning the proposed discontinuance of the Ashton Post Office. Your comments, along with others received, will be included in the official record and considered carefully before further action is taken.

In response to your letter:

- You expressed a concern about why the postmaster position was not filled. All management positions were frozen in anticipation of the reorganization efforts.

If it is determined that a discontinuance of the Ashton Post Office should be pursued, a formal proposal will be posted in the Sibley Post Office and Ashton Post Office at a later date. If you have additional questions or comments, please feel free to contact Karen Lenane at (319) 399-2902.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Gochenour", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

KENT GOCHENOUR
Manager, Post Office Operations
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 52406-9998



06/30/2011

BRIAN MINO
PO BOX 278
ASHTON, IA 51232

Dear Postal Service Customer:

Thank you for returning your questionnaire concerning the proposed discontinuance of the Ashton Post Office. Your comments, along with others received, will be included in the official record and considered carefully before further action is taken.

In response to your letter:

- The officer in charge position is considered only a temporary position until a postmaster is assigned or the office is discontinued. If the office were to remain open, the Postal Service would be required to fill the position with a full time postmaster who would have benefits.

If it is determined that a discontinuance of the Ashton Post Office should be pursued, a formal proposal will be posted in the Sibley Post Office and Ashton Post Office at a later date. If you have additional questions or comments, please feel free to contact Karen Lenane at (319) 399-2902.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Gochenour", written in a cursive style.

KENT GOCHENOUR
Manager, Post Office Operations
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 52406-9998



06/30/2011

BRIAN MINO
PO BOX 278
ASHTON, IA 51232

Dear Postal Service Customer:

Thank you for returning your questionnaire concerning the proposed discontinuance of the Ashton Post Office. Your comments, along with others received, will be included in the official record and considered carefully before further action is taken.

In response to your letter:

- With the loss of 32 million dollars a day, the Postal Service is aggressively seeking means to reduce expenses. The Postal Service has successfully reduced expenses by 12 billion dollars over the past 4 years, reduced the workforce by 34% since 2000, and has been studying mail processing facilities and stations for discontinuance. The Postal Service has been able to achieve this without lay offs and meeting record levels of service. However, these expense saving measures have not been enough to slow the loss of 32 million a day. As a result, every level within the Postal Service is being evaluated to see if there is a means of performing the service in a more cost effective manner. Rural delivery to the Ashton community is a means of providing effective and regular service in a more cost effective manner.

If it is determined that a discontinuance of the Ashton Post Office should be pursued, a formal proposal will be posted in the Sibley Post Office and Ashton Post Office at a later date. If you have additional questions or comments, please feel free to contact Karen Lenane at (319) 399-2902.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Gochenour", written in a cursive style.

KENT GOCHENOUR
Manager, Post Office Operations
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 52406-9998

May 24, 2011

Gail Duba
Hawkeye District Manager
U.S. Postal Service
PO Box 189800
Des Moines, IA 50318

Ms. Duba:

Let me start by introducing myself. I am Brian Mino, President of the Ashton State Bank in Ashton, Iowa as well as a member of the Ashton Post Office Suspension Committee that was formed in 2006 when the then existing post office was emergency suspended by Thomas Allen, then acting post office operations manager, for environmental reasons. Once suspended and moved to Sheldon, my committee successfully worked with the U.S. Postal Service to restore a temporary facility to Ashton and operate on a half-day basis. Currently, we still operate on the same schedule. Over the years, I and other member of the committee and community, have met with various representatives of the postal service including your predecessor Doug Morrow, Mike Ward from Western Area, Gary Mattux from Western Area and various post office operations managers including Thomas Allen, Laurie Slater-Trautwein and now Ken Gochenour. I have not had the opportunity to meet you, but felt it is imperative that I at least attempt to open a dialogue with you so that we can continue the cooperative and beneficial relationship that Ashton and the Postal Service have shared.

I am sure you remember that Ashton is on the list of possible post office closures in Iowa. I am enclosing copies of correspondence that I provided to Sara Lindauer to utilize in her evaluation of the situation in Ashton. As you review it, you will find that I feel that Ashton merits continued postal service as we now have. We feel it is profitable not only as it stands, but would remain profitable if wages were improved for the officer in charge that we now have. We are not requesting an increase in hours, or a better facility, just continuance in our current situation. We fully understand the financial difficulty that the postal service is experiencing and do not want to do anything that would make that situation worse, but feel it is imperative for Ashton to survive this.

After you have read my attachments, please feel free to contact me at one of the phone numbers shown on this letterhead. I look forward to any comments or questions you may have and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

BDM/bdm
enc.



June 3, 2011

Brian Mino
Ashton State Bank
PO Box 278
Ashton IA 51232-0278

Dear Mr. Mino:


This is in response to your letter regarding the Ashton Post Office.

The Postal Service is currently conducting a review of postal operations at the Ashton Post Office. The review is ongoing and no final decision has been made. You can be assured that postal officials are devoting careful attention and effort to this review and customers will be notified in advance of any changes that may affect service in their area.

On May 2, 2011 a community meeting was held to provide customers the opportunity to voice their opinions and air their concerns. Questionnaires, meetings, and other methods are used to ensure that all issues are fully explored before any final decision is made, and all final decisions are subject to review by the independent Postal Regulatory Commission. If an office is closed, the office name is retained for use in local mailing addresses to preserve community identity.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns. Should you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Hawkeye District Consumer Affairs office at 515-251-2330.

Sincerely,


Gail M. Duba

May 24, 2011

Joni Martin
Consumer Affairs Manager
U.S. Postal Service
7900 Hickman Road
Des Moines, IA 50324-4400

Ms. Martin:

I wish to introduce myself, or reintroduce myself, as Brian Mino, President of the Ashton State Bank and a member of the Ashton Post Office Suspension Committee that was formed in 2006 when the post office in Ashton was emergency suspended by then acting post office operations manager Thomas Allen. Over the next number of years, I held various meetings with Doug Morrow, Mike Ward, Tom Allen, Laurie Slater-Trautwein, and most recently with Gary Mattox in 2010. I believe you were to attend one of the meetings that was held in Sioux City, but were unable to attend, and I don't remember ever meeting you. However, I thought it appropriate to introduce myself to possibly jog your memory so that you might recall the previous happenings in Ashton.

As you now know, we have once again been placed on a list for closure of our post office. I am enclosing copies of correspondence that I provided to Sara Lindauer to utilize in her evaluation of the situation in Ashton. As you review it, you will find that I feel that Ashton merits continued postal service as we now have. We feel it is profitable not only as it stands, but would remain profitable if wages were improved for the officer in charge that we now have. We are not requesting an increase in hours, or a better facility, just continuance in our current situation. We fully understand the financial difficulty that the postal service is experiencing and do not want to do anything that would make that situation worse.

After you have read my attachments, please feel free to contact me at one of the phone numbers shown on this letterhead. I look forward to any comments or questions you may have and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

BDM/bdm
enc.

MARKETING



May 31, 2011

Brian D. Mino, President/CEO
Ashton State Bank
317 3rd St.
PO Box 278
Ashton, IA 51232-0278

Dear Mr. Mino:

This is in response to your inquiry regarding the Ashton Post Office.

Thank you for sharing your concerns. The Postal Service is currently conducting a review of postal operations at the Ashton Post Office. The review is ongoing and no final decision has been made. You can be assured that postal officials are devoting careful attention and effort to this review and customers will be notified in advance of any changes that may affect service in their area.

To ensure that all community issues and concerns are fully explored, questionnaires are available at the Ashton Post Office and a community meeting was held on May 2, 2011 to provide an opportunity for customer feedback.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns. Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Hawkeye District Consumer Affairs office at 515-251-2330.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joni Martin".

Joni Martin
Manager, Consumer Affairs & Claims

JM/pj

Reference: CA105296003

Cc: Lori Slater-Trautwein, Postmaster, Sioux City, IA
Sara Lindauer, Post Office Review Investigator

August 24, 2011

Kent Gochenour
Manager, Post Office Operations
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-9998

COPY

Re: Ashton, Iowa Post Office (51232)

Mr. Gochenour:

I am in receipt of your correspondence dated June 30, 2011 as well as the "Proposal to Close the Ashton, IA Post Office and Establish Service by Rural Route Service" that was posted on July 11, 2011. In addition to these items, I have reviewed the entire larger packet at the post office that contains the community questionnaires and your responses.

In my review, I find that you failed to address one of my biggest concerns in that "How are you providing the Ashton State Bank with the same service?". I pointed out at the community meeting as well as through my correspondence that the Ashton State Bank has time sensitive mail and simultaneous delivery and pickup via rural courier will not work. If the route courier delivers the mail, that would be fine, but I have time sensitive mail at the end of my work day that needs to go out in the mail **TODAY**, not tomorrow when the rural carrier returns. This mail is not ready to go out until 4:00 to 4:30 in the afternoon and the current practice is to place this time-sensitive mail in the blue box and it is picked up at approximately 4:45 p.m. by your inter-office courier then. If the Ashton Post Office is closed, I will be forced to pay an employee mileage and time to deliver this mail to Sibley at a cost to the Ashton State Bank of at least \$75.00 per week or at an annual cost of approximately \$4,000 per year.

Based upon this, the postal service's claim that service would be unaffected by the closure of the Ashton, Iowa Post Office is not true. In this case as in many other, closure of local offices and centralization of responsibilities ends up being nothing more than an immediate tax or expense for the patrons on a local basis.

I would like for you to address this issue with me as well as those that are making the final decision to close or maintain the Ashton, Iowa Post Office. I feel that this is the most important part of this decision and the correspondence and responses to the surveys have ignored this fact previously. I realize that this decision is to be made shortly and I bring your attention to this matter at this time so that this item is considered in the final decision making process and not lost with the other concerns voiced earlier.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Mino
President / CEO

COPY

BDM/bdm

cc: Gail M. Duba, Joni Martin, Rep. Steven King, Sen. Charles Grassley, Sen. Thomas Harkin,
Andrea Easter, Jacob Bossman

COPY



UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

September 7, 2011

Brian D. Mino
Ashton State Bank
PO Box 278
Ashton, IA 51232-0278

Dear Mr. Mino:

This responds to your letter dated on August 24, 2011 regarding the Ashton Post Office.

The U.S. Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations. As a result of dramatic declines in mail volume, the Postal Service continues to experience significantly reduced revenue. In fact, over the past five years, mail volume has declined by 43.1 billion pieces, customer visits have decreased by 200 million, and retail transactions have diminished by \$2 billion. Currently, the Postal Service is on track to lose \$10 billion in fiscal year 2011. In order to sustain universal mail service to the American people, we are taking every action within our control to cut costs and streamline operations across the organization.

As you know, the Ashton Post Office has been selected for review and is currently under consideration for closure. During this process, postal managers considered the effect on the community and postal employees, the ability to provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to the affected community, and potential economic savings. In regards to your concerns with the dispatch time for outgoing mail from Ashton, the rural route carrier serving this area will have the route adjusted to accommodate the latest possible time for picking up outgoing mail. We are currently studying the possibility of adjusting the route serving this area to provide a time of approximately 3pm. This will be determined once final decisions are made on the status of the office and we will provide communications to our customers in Ashton if these changes occur.

Before the Postal Service makes a decision to close or consolidate an independent Post Office, we comply with all the stipulations mandated by federal law. All final decisions are subject to review by the independent Postal Regulatory Commission, and the discontinuance procedures contained in Title 39, United States Code, are exercised before an independent Post Office can be permanently closed. In the case of the Ashton Post Office, we feel that procedures were followed as outlined by the rules that govern this process.

If I can be of assistance with other postal issues, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Kent Gochenour
Manager Post Office Operations
PO Box 9998
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401-9998

CALLED KENT
(712) 212-4929
9-9-11

Reference: ca106207674

Date of Posting: 11/07/2011

Date of Removal: 12/09/2011

FINAL DETERMINATION TO CLOSE
THE ASHTON, IA POST OFFICE
AND ESTABLISH
SERVICE BY RURAL ROUTE SERVICE

DOCKET NUMBER 1353512 - 51232



I. RESPONSIVENESS TO COMMUNITY POSTAL NEEDS

The Postal Service is issuing the final determination to close the Ashton, IA Post Office and provide delivery and retail services by rural route service under the administrative responsibility of the Sibley Post Office, located eight miles away.

The postmaster position became vacant when the postmaster was reassigned on August 09, 2006. Since the postmaster vacancy an OIC has been installed to operate the office. Postmaster level and office service hours are determined by a workload analysis which includes the number of deliveries and revenue.

The office was studied for possible closing or consolidation due to the following reasons: Study for discontinuance is based on declining volumes, declining workload, revenue and the ability of the Postal Service to provide effective and regular service by an alternate means.

The Ashton Post Office, an EAS-11 level, provides service from 08:00 - 11:45 Monday - Friday, 10:00 - 12:00 Saturday and lobby hours of 24 hrs on Monday - Friday and 24 hrs on Saturday to 147 post office box or general delivery customers and no delivery customers. Retail services included the sale of stamps, stamped paper, and money orders; special services such as Registered Mail, Certified Mail, Insured Mail, COD Mail, and Express Mail services; and the acceptance and dispatch of all classes of mail.

The retail window averaged 11 transaction(s) accounting for 12 minute(s) of retail workload daily. With minimal workload, the Postal Service feels that effective and regular service will be provided by rural route service. Office receipts for the last 3 years were: \$36,534 (95 revenue units) in FY 2008; \$31,557 (82 revenue units) in FY 2009; and \$31,612 (82 revenue units) in FY 2010. There were two permit mailer(s) or postage meter customer(s).

On May 02, 2011, representatives from the Postal Service were available at Ashton Community Center to answer questions and provide information to customers. 72 customer(s) attended the meeting.

On April 11, 2011, 385 questionnaires were distributed to delivery customers of the Ashton Post Office. Questionnaires were also available over the counter for retail customers at the Ashton Post Office. 142 questionnaires were returned. Responses regarding the proposed alternate service were as follows: 14 favorable, 55 unfavorable, and 73 expressed no opinion.

One congressional inquiry was received on May 20, 2011.

A petition supporting the retention of the Ashton Post Office was received on June 01, 2011, with 190 signatures.

When this final determination is implemented, delivery and retail services will be provided by the Sibley Post Office, an EAS-18 level office. Window service hours at the Sibley Post Office are from 08:30-16:30, Monday through Friday, and 08:30-09:30 on Saturday. There are 127 post office boxes available.

The proposal to close the Ashton Post Office was posted with an invitation for comment at the Ashton Post Office and Sibley Post Office from July 11, 2011 to September 11, 2011. The following additional concerns were received during the proposal posting period:

1. **Concern:** Customer expressed a concern about irregular hours that the rural route serves the community.

Response: Carriers strive to provide service at approximately the same time on a daily basis, however mail volumes and weather conditions often effect delivery times.
2. **Concern:** Customer expressed a concern about package delivery and pickup.

Response: Rural carriers will deliver packages that fit in your rural mail box, if the package does not fit in the mail box, the carrier will deliver the package up to ½ mile off of the line of travel, at a designated place, such as on your porch or under a carport. For carrier pick up of packages, you can contact the administrative Post Office, letting the carrier know that you have a package available for pick up. The carrier can deviate from the line of travel in order to receive packages. The rural carrier will accept letters, flats or packages up to 13 ounces for mailing. The carrier will estimate the cost and provide a receipt for any money received. On the following delivery day the carrier will provide change or a bill for the amount over the estimate. Packages over 13 ounces may be picked up if the postage was printed online or with a traceable meter.
3. **Concern:** Customer expressed a concern about the inability of the rural carrier to weigh and rate letters and packages.

Response: The rural carrier will accept any letters or packages up to 13 ounces for mailing. The carrier will estimate the cost and provide a receipt for any money received. On the following delivery day the carrier will provide change or a bill for the amount over the estimate.

4. **Concern:** Customers thought the Postal Service wasn't doing enough to cut expenses.
- Response:** With the loss of 32 million dollars a day, the Postal Service is aggressively seeking means to reduce expenses. The Postal Service has successfully reduced expenses by 12 billion dollars over the past 4 years, reduced the workforce by 34% since 2000, and has been studying mail processing facilities and stations for discontinuance. The Postal Service has been able to achieve this without lay offs and meeting record levels of service. However, these expense saving measures have not been enough to slow the loss of 32 million a day. As a result, every level within the Postal Service is being evaluated to see if there is a means of performing the service in a more cost effective manner. Rural delivery to the Ashton community is a means of providing effective and regular service in a more cost effective manner.
5. **Concern:** Customers thought the Postal Service wasn't doing enough to cut expenses.
- Response:** With the loss of 32 million dollars a day, the Postal Service is aggressively seeking means to reduce expenses. The Postal Service has successfully reduced expenses by 12 billion dollars over the past 4 years, reduced the workforce by 34% since 2000, and has been studying mail processing facilities and stations for discontinuance. The Postal Service has been able to achieve this without lay offs and meeting record levels of service. However, these expense saving measures have not been enough to slow the loss of 32 million a day. As a result, every level within the Postal Service is being evaluated to see if there is a means of performing the service in a more cost effective manner. Rural delivery to the Ashton community is a means of providing effective and regular service in a more cost effective manner.
6. **Concern:** Customers were concerned why the postmaster position was not filled.
- Response:** All management positions were frozen in anticipation of the reorganization efforts.
7. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about having to travel to another Post Office for service.
- Response:** Services provided at the Post Office will be available from the carrier, and customers will not have to travel to another Post Office for service. Most transactions do not require meeting the carrier at the mailbox. Stamps by Mail and Money Order Application forms are available for customer convenience. Stamps are also available at many stores and gas stations where customers may already shop, online at usps.com, or by calling 1-800-STAMP-24.
8. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about later delivery of mail.
- Response:** The top priority of the Postal Service is to provide mail service in the most efficient manner possible because all of our costs are reflected in postage rates customers must pay. Delivery costs are one of our biggest expenses, so you can be assured that careful thought is given to the structure of each route. A customer's location on a carrier's line of travel determines the time of day mail is delivered. This, of course, precludes providing early delivery of mail to every customer because, no matter how we structure a route, somebody must be last. We do, however, carefully consider the volume of mail for each route so that we can deliver the greatest amount of mail at the earliest possible hour. With the largest fleet of delivery vehicles in the world, to minimize vehicle and fuel expenses we must also pay special attention to energy conservation measures. When the price of gasoline goes up one cent per gallon our total gasoline cost rises more than \$1 million. Therefore, when structuring a route, we must balance our goal to deliver as much mail as possible as early as possible with the need to minimize the travel distance a route must cover. We do regret the inconvenience to customers who would like, but cannot receive, early mail delivery. For those customers we offer alternative delivery services, such as Post Office box service that provide access to their mail earlier and throughout the day.

9. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about obtaining accountable mail and large parcels.

Response: If the customer lives less than one-half mile from the line of travel, the carrier will attempt delivery of accountable items and large parcels to the customer's residence. If the customer lives over one-half mile away or is not home when delivery is attempted, a notice will be left in the mailbox. Large parcels will be left outside the mailbox or at a location designated by the customer (if authorized by the customer), or a notice will be left in the mailbox. Attempted delivery items will be taken back to the Post Office. Customers may pick up the item at the Post Office or request redelivery online at usps.com or by calling 1-800-ASK-USPS.

10. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about obtaining services from the carrier.

Response: Most retail services provided at the post office are available from the carrier and do not require meeting the carrier at the mailbox. Stamps by Mail and Money Order Application forms are available for customer convenience. Listed below are some services available from the carrier and how to obtain them.

PURCHASING STAMPS BY MAIL

The Stamps by Mail Program provides customers the opportunity to purchase stamps, envelopes, and postal cards by using a Stamps by Mail order form, available from the post office or the carrier. Commemorative stamps and stamp collecting products are also available. The customer addresses the postage paid order form envelope, encloses payment by personal check or postal money order made payable to the US Postal Service, and mails the form (postage-free) or leaves it in the mailbox for the carrier to pick up. Most orders are processed overnight, and some immediately.

PURCHASING POSTAL MONEY ORDERS

Customers may purchase money orders by meeting the carrier at the mailbox, completing an application, and paying the carrier (in cash) the price of the money order, plus the fee. The carrier gives the customer a receipt for the application. The money order is completed when the carrier returns to the post office, and a money order receipt is left in the customer's mailbox on the next delivery day. Most customers provide the carrier with a stamped, self-addressed envelope in which the completed money order is mailed to its destination. If customers prefer, the completed money orders will be returned for verification on the next delivery day.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Special services such as certified, registered, Express Mail, delivery confirmation, signature confirmation, and COD may be obtained from the carrier by leaving a note in the mailbox, along with the appropriate payment. The carrier will provide the services that day and leave a customer receipt in the mailbox on the next delivery day.

HOLDING MAIL

Customers who will be away for an extended time, such as a vacation, may request that their mail be held at the post office during their absence. Request may be made through the mail, online at www.usps.com, or by telephone at 1-800-ask usps (1-800-275-8777) Upon return the customer asks the post office to resume delivery.

11. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about obtaining services from the carrier.

Response: The rural carrier provides all the services that are available at the Post Office with the exception of PO Box service and bulk mail acceptance. This includes stamp sales, package pick up, special services and money order sales.

12. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about senior citizens.

Response:

Carrier service is beneficial to many senior citizens and those who face special challenges because the carrier can provide delivery and retail services to roadside mailboxes or Centralized Box Units. Customers do not have to make a special trip to the Post Office for service. Special provisions are made for hardship cases or special customer needs. To request an exception for hardship delivery, customers may contact the administrative postmaster for more information.

13. **Concern:**

Customers were concerned about the extra workload the rural carrier would have if the office were to be discontinued.

Response:

Rural carriers are paid based on an evaluation of the route. Many routes can be added to before they meet an overburdened status. Deliveries will be added to routes as needed. If all routes have been filled, an auxiliary route which would be served by an existing employee.

14. **Concern:**

Customers were concerned that residents would be required to go out of town to get their mail.

Response:

All Ashton customers will be provided mail delivery within the community including residential and business.

15. **Concern:**

Customers were concerned that residents would be required to go out of town to get their mail.

Response:

All Ashton customers will be provided mail delivery within the community including residential and business.

16. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if 5 day delivery was still being considered.

Response:

The Postal Service has asked congress for approval to allow 5 day delivery. However, congress has yet to act on that decision.

17. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if it was possible for 1 postmaster to overlook several Post Offices to save money.

Response:

The Post Office is considering several different options at this time including a restructuring of the management duties of postmasters. However, it is the vision of the Postal Service that its footprint be reduced. As a result, many post offices may be discontinued.

18. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if mail would be delivered to their house.

Response:

The mode of delivery has yet to be determined. The mode of delivery decision will be between curbside mailboxes or cluster box units which may or may not result in a delivery location at a customer's residence. Customers with physical challenges may request a hardship delivery which will allow the Postal Service to deliver mail directly to a customer's residence. Please contact the Sibley Post Office for more information.

19. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if mail would be delivered to their house.

Response:

The mode of delivery has yet to be determined. The mode of delivery decision will be between curbside mailboxes or cluster box units which may or may not result in a delivery location at a customer's residence. Customers with physical challenges may request a hardship delivery which will allow the Postal Service to deliver mail directly to a customer's residence. Please contact the Sibley Post Office for more information.

20. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if mail would be delivered to their house.

Response:

The mode of delivery has yet to be determined. The mode of delivery decision will be between curbside mailboxes or cluster box units which may or may not result in a delivery location at a customer's residence. Customers with physical challenges may request a hardship delivery which will allow the Postal Service to deliver mail directly to a customer's residence. Please contact the Sibley Post Office for more information.

21. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if the Aston Post Office could remain with part time hours and no sitting postmaster.

Response:

The Post Office is considering several different options at this time including a restructuring of the management duties of postmasters. However, it is the vision of the Postal Service that its footprint be reduced. As a result, many post offices may be discontinued.

22. **Concern:**

Customers wondered if the PO Box could not be served by the rural carrier.

Response:

Rural delivery to a PO Box section in a building would still involve the cost of maintaining and leasing a building. Rural delivery to cluster box units or curbside delivery is a more cost effective means of delivery.

23. **Concern:**

Customers wondered why the Postal Service could not leave the officer in charge as a permanent position.

Response:

The officer in charge position is considered only a temporary position until a postmaster is assigned or the office is discontinued. If the office were to remain open, the Postal Service would be required to fill the position with a full time postmaster who would have benefits.

24. **Concern:**

Customers wondered why the Postal Service could not leave the officer in charge as a permanent position.

Response:

The officer in charge position is considered only a temporary position until a postmaster is assigned or the office is discontinued. If the office were to remain open, the Postal Service would be required to fill the position with a full time postmaster who would have benefits.

25. **Concern:**

Customers wondered why the Postal Service could not leave the officer in charge as a permanent position.

Response:

The officer in charge position is considered only a temporary position until a postmaster is assigned or the office is discontinued. If the office were to remain open, the Postal Service would be required to fill the position with a full time postmaster who would have benefits.

26. **Concern:**

Customers asked about the Postal Service's obligation to prefund the retirement account.

Response:

The Postal Service has asked Congress to reconsider the law requiring the Postal Service to prefund the retirement account to the degree that has been practiced. Congress has yet to decide on that issue.

27. **Concern:**

Customers asked how much the Postal Service would save by switching to 5 day delivery.

Response:

The Postal Service proposes that switching to 5 day delivery could potentially save the Postal Service \$3 billion a year. Congress has yet to act on the proposal to switch to 5 day delivery.

28. **Concern:**

Customers asked if the Ashton Post Office was losing money.

Response:

An office running at a deficit is not a contributing factor when studying an office for discontinuance. As a result, whether an office is able to offset the costs with their revenue is not the sole criteria in determining if an office should be discontinued. The ability of the Postal Service to provide effective and regular service is the main criteria that is used in these studies.

29. **Concern:**

Customers asked why the office was not filled prior to the decision to discontinue.

Response:

Currently there is a freeze on filling postmaster positions due to the economic situation that the Postal Service is in. This freeze allows the Postal Service to review the office.

30. **Concern:**

Customers expressed concern about collection of outgoing mail

Response:

Collection of mail will be made by the carrier when serving the route. The customer should raise the flag on the mailbox to alert the carrier that outgoing mail is to be collected from the mailbox. The cluster box units will have an outgoing mail slot that can be used by anyone wishing to drop off outgoing mail.

31. **Concern:** Customers expressed concern about the amount of bulk business mail they receive.
- Response:** Bulk business mail is the Postal Service's a major revenue contributor. Without bulk business mail, the Postal Service would not be able to deliver to every address, every delivery day.
32. **Concern:** Customers inquired about cluster box unit installation and maintenance.
- Response:** Cluster box units are purchased, installed, and maintained by the Postal Service at no expense to customers.
33. **Concern:** Customers questioned as to why we were looking at the Ashton Post Office when the population is larger than other communities that are not being looked at.
- Response:** Post Offices are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. When there is a vacancy in a small office, it is customary to conduct a study of the business activity and investigate the feasibility of provide service by alternate means.
34. **Concern:** Customers questioned why we couldn't replace the Post Office with a contract Post Office.
- Response:** The Contract Post Office is not considered when rural delivery can provide effective and regular service in a more cost effective way.
35. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about later delivery of mail
- Response:** A customer's location on a carrier's line of travel determines the time of day mail is delivered. This, of course, precludes providing early delivery of mail to every customer because, no matter how we structure a route, somebody must be last. We do, however, carefully consider the volume of mail for each route so that we can deliver the greatest amount of mail at the earliest possible hour. With the largest fleet of delivery vehicles in the world we must pay special attention to energy conservation measures, to minimize vehicle and fuel expenses. When the price of gasoline goes up one cent per gallon our total gasoline cost rises more than \$8 million. Therefore, when structuring a route, we must balance our goal to deliver as much mail as possible as early as possible with the need to minimize the travel distance a route must cover.
36. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about mail security internally and externally.
- Response:** Customers may place a lock on their mailboxes. The mailbox must have a slot large enough to accommodate the customer's normal daily mail volume. The Postal Service does not open mailboxes which are locked and does not accept keys for this purpose. Cluster box units are individually locked and provide security as well. Postal Service employees are heavily screen before employment to deter the hiring of any questionable personnel.
37. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about obtaining services from the carrier
- Response:** Most transactions do not require meeting the carrier at the mailbox. Stamps by Mail and Money Order Application forms are available for customer convenience. Listed below are some services available from the carrier and how to obtain them.

PURCHASING STAMPS BY MAIL

The Stamps by Mail Program provides customers the opportunity to purchase stamps, envelopes, and postal cards by using Form 3227-R, Stamp Purchase Order (Rural), available from the post office or the carrier. Commemorative stamps and stamp collecting products are also available. The customer addresses the postage paid order form envelope, encloses payment by personal check or postal money order made payable to the US Postal Service, and mails the form (postage-free) or leaves it in the mailbox for the carrier to pick up. Most orders are processed overnight, and some immediately.

PURCHASING POSTAL MONEY ORDERS

Customers may purchase money orders by meeting the carrier at the mailbox, completing an application, and paying the carrier (in cash) the price of the money order, plus the fee. The carrier gives the customer a receipt for the application. The money order is completed when the carrier returns to the post office, and a money order receipt is left in the customer's mailbox on the next delivery day. Most customers provide the carrier with a stamped, self-addressed envelope in which the completed money order is mailed to its destination. If customers prefer, the completed money orders will be returned for verification on the next delivery day.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Special services such as certified, registered, Express Mail, delivery confirmation, signature confirmation, and COD may be obtained from the carrier by leaving a note in the mailbox, along with the appropriate payment. The carrier will provide the services that day and leave a customer receipt in the mailbox on the next delivery day.

HOLDING MAIL

Customers who will be away for an extended time, such as a vacation, may request that their mail be held at the post office during their absence. Upon return the customer asks the post office to resume delivery.

38. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about senior citizens
- Response:** Carrier service is beneficial to many senior citizens and those who face special challenges because the carrier can provide delivery and retail services to roadside mailboxes or CBUs. Customers do not have to make a special trip to the post office for service. Special provisions are made for hardship cases or special customer needs. To request an exception for hardship delivery, customers may contact the administrative postmaster for more information.
39. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about the aviation security guidelines in mailing packages with metered and PC postage parcels.
- Response:** Customers may drop off items that are over 13 ounces into collection receptacles if they are metered or have PC postage applied as long as they are destined for domestic locations. Metered and PC postage applied items that are international will need to be presented at a retail counter.
40. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about the employment of the OIC.
- Response:** The OIC is also the PMR of the office. Efforts will be made to reassign her to another office.
41. **Concern:** Customers were concerned about the loss of a gathering place and an information center.
- Response:** Residents may continue to meet informally, socialize, and share information at the other businesses, churches, and residences in town.
42. **Concern:** Customers were concerned that the Postal Service is wasting money on advertising.
- Response:** Advertising is a necessary measure to ensure that America is educated about what types of services we provide. Many of our advertising efforts have been very successful in enticing customers to use our services.

Some advantages of the proposal are:

1. The rural and contract carriers may provide retail services, alleviating the need to go to the post office. Stamps by Mail order forms are provided for customer convenience.
2. Customers opting for carrier service will have 24-hour access to their mail.
3. Savings for the Postal Service contribute in the long run to stable postage rates and savings for customers.
4. CBUs can offer the security of individually locked mail compartments. Parcel lockers provide convenient parcel delivery for customers.
5. Customers opting for carrier service will not have to pay post office box fees.
6. Saves time and energy for customers who drive to the post office to pick up mail.

Some disadvantages of the proposal are:

1. The loss of a retail outlet. Retail services may be provided by the rural or contract delivery carrier.
2. Meeting the rural or contract delivery carrier at the box to transact business. However, it is not necessary to be present to conduct most Postal Service transactions.
3. A change in the mailing address. The community name will continue to be used in the new address. A carrier route address will be assigned.
4. A change in your PO Box Fees may be a result of this proposal.

Taking all available information into consideration, the Postal Service concludes this final determination will provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to the community.

II. EFFECT ON COMMUNITY

Ashton is an incorporated community located in OSCEOLA County. The community is administered politically by Mayor and City Council. Police protection is provided by the Osceola County Sheriff. Fire protection is provided by the Ashton Fire Department. The community is comprised of Retirees, Self employed, commuters. and those who commute to work at nearby communities and may work in local businesses.

Businesses and organizations include: Public Library, Ashton Museum, American Legion Community Center, Ashton Bible Church, Presbyterian Church, Saint Mary's Catholic Church, Bible Church Rectory, City of Ashton, Poet, DOT, Klein Agency, Ashton Cedar Cabin, Heiman Fire Equipment, United Farmer's Coop, Land O' Lakes Feed, Create-A-Concept Gallery & Studio, Pete's Bar, Ashton Palm's Bar and Grill, Corbett Hardware, Plumbing, State Bank, Ashton Motor Co, N & N Auto Body & Service, Ashton Maintenance Garage, Funeral Home, Generation's Hair Studio, Jj's Hair Affair, Otis Electric, Kolbeck Electrical Repair, Mikes Nursery & Landscaping, Weber Stump Removal, Sterler Storage, Ashton Osceola Energy CO., Ashton Blacksmith Shop: Frontier Telephone, Morley Construction, Lloyd Baker Trucking, Ashton Laser Creations, Ken Roder Trucking, Kevin Ozbun Trucking, Iedema Trucking, Iedema Construction, Roetzel Trucking, Nettle Ashton Iedema Construction, J&J Farms, Zylstra Feedlot, Hallett Materials, Pioneer Seeds, D&J Farms, B&E Farms, Otter Creek Feeders, Country Customs, E-Rate Complete, Cox Ag LTD, Kelly's Masonry, Pine Grove Pork, B&G Farms, Krogman Construction, Ultimate Auto Body, Hospers Sanitation, Hoyer Dairy, G&L Farms, Lonneman Wapati, Huss Bros, Krogman Finishing, Johnson Gravel, S&S Hog, Sterling Acres Dairy, Ashton Johnson Trucking, RTB Inc, Frick Finishing, Strouth and Frick Manuer, J&M Trucking, Habben Landscaping, Nast Zinger Trucking, Honkomp Trucking, A&M Pork, Winkle Farms Inc, Country Fix-It, S&S Farms. Residents may travel to nearby communities for other supplies and services.

Nonpostal services provided at the Ashton Post Office will be available at the Sibley Post Office. Government forms normally provided by the Post Office will also be available at the Sibley Post Office or by contacting your local government agency.

The following nonpostal concerns were expressed from questionnaires, the community meeting, on the petition, and on the congressional inquiry:

1. Concern:

Customers were concerned about business growth if the Post Office is discontinued in the community.

Response:

Businesses generally required regular and effective postal service, and these will always be provided in the Ashton community. There is no indication that the business community will be adversely affected. Most new businesses moving to the community do not depend on the location of a post office, but on the provision of effective and regular Postal Service.

Based on the information obtained in the course of this discontinuance study, the Postal Service concludes this final determination will not adversely affect the community.

III. EFFECT ON EMPLOYEES

The postmaster position became vacant when the postmaster was reassigned on August 09, 2006. The noncareer postmaster relief (PMR) may be separated from the Postal Service. No other Postal Service employee will be adversely affected. Since the postmaster vacancy an OIC has been installed to operate the office.

IV. ECONOMIC SAVINGS

The Postal Service estimates an annual savings of \$ 25,974 with a breakdown as follows:

Postmaster Salary (EAS-11, No COLA)	\$ 33,168
Fringe Benefits @ 33.5%	\$ 11,111
Annual Lease Costs	<u>+ \$ 3,960</u>
Total Annual Costs	\$ 48,239
Less Annual Cost of Replacement Service	<u>- \$ 22,265</u>

Total Annual Savings

\$ 25.974

V. OTHER FACTORS

The Postal Service has identified no other factors for consideration.

VI. SUMMARY

This is the final determination to close the Ashton, IA Post Office and provide delivery and retail services by rural route service under the administrative responsibility of the Sibley Post Office, located eight miles away.

The postmaster was reassigned on August 09, 2006. If the office has a noncareer PMR(s), they may be separated from the Postal Service; however, attempts will be made to reassign the employee(s) to a nearby facility. No other employee(s) will be adversely affected. The mail volume has declined. Effective and regular service will continue to be provided by rural route service.

The Ashton Post Office provided delivery and retail service to 147 PO Box or general delivery customers and no delivery route customers. The daily retail window transactions averaged 11. There are two permit mailers or postage meter customers.

There will no longer be a retail outlet in the community. However, delivery and retail services may be available from a rural or contract delivery carrier, which could alleviate the need to travel to a Post Office for service. The Postal Service will save an estimated \$25,974 annually. A disadvantage to some will be in meeting the rural or contract delivery carrier to transact business. However, it is not necessary to be present to conduct most Postal Service transactions with rural or contract delivery carrier.

Taking all available information into consideration, the Postal Service has determined that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and this final determination is warranted.

VII. NOTICES

- A. Support Materials. Copies of all materials upon which this final determination is based are available for public inspection at the Ashton Post Office and Sibley Post Office during normal office hours.
- B. Appeal Rights. This final determination to close the Ashton Post Office may be appealed by any person served by that office to the Postal Regulatory Commission at 901 New York Ave NW, Suite 200, Washington DC 20268-0001. Appeals must be received by the Commission within 30 days of the date this final determination is posted. If an appeal is filed, copies of appeal documents prepared by the Postal Regulatory Commission or the parties to the appeal will be made available for public inspection at Ashton Post Office and Sibley Post Office during normal office hours.



Dean J Granholm
Vice President of Delivery and Post Office Operations

10/24/2011

Date